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## INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

COMMUNIST INSURGENCY IN THAILAND:  
STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

## DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
Directorate of Intelligence  
11 August 1966

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM\*

Communist Insurgency in Thailand:  
Strengths and Weaknesses

Summary

The growth of the Communist movement in Thailand over the past two years has raised the specter of another protracted insurgent struggle in Southeast Asia. At the present time, however, the balance sheet in Thailand does not appear to favor the insurgents. An essentially stable socioeconomic situation and a long history of independent nationhood are key factors militating against Communist efforts to win popular support in the countryside. In addition, the military oligarchy in Bangkok, after a slow start, is now coming to grips with the insurgent problem and its counteroperations are gathering momentum.

Nonetheless there are soft spots in the Thai internal situation which have favored the Communists and which could prove to be increasingly troublesome over the long haul. Despite the important progress which has been made, there are still substantial underdeveloped and isolated areas which provide favorable ground for the Communists. The government's political machinery throughout the country remains extremely weak, and the military oligarchy does not appear to appreciate the contribution that government-backed political movements could make in fighting the insurgents.

In Bangkok, the Thanom-Praphat government is enjoying its third year of stable rule, but serious factional infighting, during which the counterinsurgency

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effort would almost certainly suffer, could flare up with little warning. The present government's greatest weakness in meeting the insurgent challenge, however, is simply that it does not command substantial popular support.

The Communist movement in Thailand is still in the embryonic stage, despite the increasing number of insurgent incidents. It does not, for example, yet exhibit the tight discipline and effective structure that is characteristic of Communist organizations in the neighboring countries. The Communists also suffer from a severe shortage of experienced and dedicated cadres, which has limited their ability to expand into new areas. Despite these weaknesses, the insurgents are likely to step up recruiting, propaganda, and terrorism in the coming months.

In the final analysis, the insurgency will be limited less by the action of the Bangkok government than by the fundamental strength of the Thai nation.

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